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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LUANDA 000163

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SUBJECT: ANGOLA VOTER REGISTRATION: PHASE TWO BEGINS AS GRA
INCREASES FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO ALL POLITICAL PARTIES

REF: 06 LUANDA 1304

Classified By: Amb. Cynthia Efird for reasons 1. 4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Phase two of the Angolan voter registration process began on January 15, 2007 as scheduled, with operations running smoothly and demand for registration cards high. After reviewing experiences during the month-long first phase, where over 945,000 were registered, the GRA has reevaluated and downsized the number of registration brigades needed to successfully carry out the process and based on the prospect of 2008 elections, has expanded the registration process to include all those turning eighteen by January 1, ¶2008. The CNE has revamped and relaunched its election process website to include electoral legislation and visits of foreign officials, including AF/DAS Carol Thompson.

¶2. (C) At the same time the GRA, as a result of ongoing discussions with opposition parties over the past two years, has decided to spend over USD 25 Million to support the more than one hundred officially recognized Angolan political parties. Parties will receive payments of USD 200,000 each to support their voter registration monitoring activities. The big winners of this process are the smaller parties that never planned to fully monitor voter registration and the two largest parties (the MPLA and UNITA) with the necessary resources to monitor the registration process. The big losers are the smaller parties with representation in Congress that sought to increase their representation in Congress (taking seats already held by UNITA and the MPLA), but lacked independent funding for their activities. End Summary.

Phase Two Begins Smoothly and on Time

¶3. (U) The Government of Angola began phase two of voter registration on January 15, 2007 as scheduled. During this phase, 509 registration teams, or &brigades,8 will cover every municipality in Angola, in comparison to the first phase when only 295 brigades registered almost one million citizens but were centered in provincial capitals and selected main towns. The Interministerial Commission for Elections (CIPE) and the National Electoral commission (CNE) evaluated the first phase of the voter registration campaign, and concluded that 509 brigades would suffice to complete the nationwide voter registration versus the 2000 brigades originally planned. In addition, CIPE announced that mobile brigades will only be deployed to reach outlying villages and communities towards the end of the registration period. The CIPE also amended regulations to allow all those who will be eighteen years of age by January 1, 2008, to register versus the original regulation which allowed only those already eighteen years or older to register.

14. (SBU) Ambassador Efird visited a registration center in remote Cuando Cubango Province on January 31, 2007, and while the processing itself was fairly smooth, the waiting area was crowded and she spoke with a citizen who had waited in line seven hours to register. In Cuando Cubango, the Ambassador noted the presence of party monitors as well as the soba (village authority) and a clergy representative for identity verification as needed. Ambassador Efird also visited a registration center in Huambo province, unannounced, on February 7, and found the system working efficiently, though many would-be registrants were waiting for long periods in line. On February 6, P/E chief spoke to the director for a registration center in the Rangel neighborhood of Luanda who verified that the actual registration process was being completed in a matter of minutes. However, in contrast to the provincial experience, the director noted that the influx of registrants had slowed and there were no lines at her particular center. Embassy Luanda has also received reports of local NGO representatives in the provinces successfully serving as witnesses for undocumented, but known, individuals in order to provide proof of identification.

15. (SBU) The CNE recently revamped/relaunched its website which can be found at www.cne.gv.ao and contains information on electoral legislation, statistics on the 1992 elections, a listing of political parties, and the composition of the CNE and its legal status. In addition, it features pictures and stories on the voter registration process and articles of international visitors to the CNE, including AF/DAS Carol Thompson and a delegation of Belgian Parliamentarians. CNE Director Caetano de Sousa informally asked Embassy Luanda for feedback on the site and told us that he hoped to have the

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site available in English as well. De Sousa also told us he is working with the CIPE to put the registration tally on the website. Note: CIPE, at the insistence of the CNE and civil society, is re-evaluating how to give more periodic reports on the progress of registration throughout the five-month long second phase. No official tally is available at this time beyond the just over 945,000 registered in phase one (reftel). End Note.

Government Assistance to Party Monitoring

16. (SBU) CIPE also announced that the GRA would pay each official party USD 200,000 to support accredited party monitors during the registration process. Party monitors are present in the registration stations and observe the registration process. Major opposition party leaders had earlier sought assistance from the Government as well as from the US and other bilateral missions for supporting their respective party monitors with transportation and meal stipends. An initial GRA proposal that would have supported all parties in Congress was widely repudiated as favoring too few parties. The new proposal covers all parties equally. In general, party monitors are unpaid, though some of the parties are able to provide a small allowance to each monitor of between USD 100 and 150 per month. The parties are responsible for providing food and transportation stipends for their respective monitors. Note: Official registration brigade workers are paid and provided with transportation and meal stipends. End Note.

17. (SBU) Opposition parties met with CIPE Director Virgilio Fontes Pereira to discuss the possibility of meal and transportation support for their monitors. In response to Pereira's question on what type of support would be most beneficial to parties, the major parties, i.e., those parties which actually have monitors, all expressed a desire for food and transport stipends. However, an overwhelming number of the 126 Angolan parties wanted a flat payment and thus carried the decision. Thus, the GRA will provide USD 200,000

per party so each can more fully participate in the registration process. However, most observers do not expect that the government will track how the small opposition parties spend their money, or require money not spent on observation to be returned to the government. The majority of the Angola,s official parties constitute no more than &mom and pop8 parties, formed in the 1990s when the government gave annual support stipends to parties. Note. Both the MPLA and UNITA, which feel that they have sufficient party funds to cover monitoring, were silent during the debate. End Note.

18. (U) Doing the Math: Parties with accredited registration monitors ideally have one representative per brigade, or 509 workers. The average cost of a bus ride in Luanda is USD one) two dollars each way and a hot lunch cost about five dollars. This amounts to about USD 160) 180 per worker per month or cost per party of over USD 400,000 for the next five months. There is no assurance that the GRA will provide additional payments should the registration period be extended. Total Cost to the GRA) over USD 25 Million (126 parties at 200,000 each).

Comment

19. (C) The main beneficiaries of the new GRA program are the over 100 small parties that suddenly received a USD 200,000 bonus. UNITA and the MPLA are also winners in that the parties that might have challenged them, the newer up-and-coming parties with a representation in Congress which were starting to gain traction do not have the funds or investors necessary to mount a national presence during registration. These parties (such as the PRS, the PRD, PADEPA, etc.) were counting on the government to help finance their participation in registration. They also hoped to use the monitoring activity as a way of giving their parties national coverage. The stipends also would have helped give party faithful some remuneration for their efforts. Perhaps the biggest winner is the GRA, which by taking an apparently open democratic approach (a flat fee for all), acted on opposition concerns, in a way that discourages new parties that could challenge the MPLA's electoral base (or incidentally UNITA,s base).

EFIRD